

## Directive to prepare bill seeking elected dist bodies

By Staff Correspondent

The first Cabinet meeting of the year yesterday assigned the Local Government Ministry to prepare a fresh bill seeking setting up of elected bodies to run the country's district level administrations.

Giving a guideline to the ministry for preparing the bill, the Cabinet resolved that the chairmen of the district bodies would be elected by an electoral college comprising chairmen of thana, union and municipal level local governments, elected directly by the people.

"Representation from cross section of people and development agencies will also be there," a Cabinet member said adding that the guideline has been given on the basis of the recommendations of the Local Government Commission.

The decision on preparation of a fresh bill was made following over two hours' detailed discussion by Cabinet members on a draft legislation prepared on the basis of the District Council Act, 1988.

The local government ministry submitted a draft bill for discussion, but the Cabinet rejected it on the ground that it was nothing but a clumsy version of the District Council Act, 1988 with a lot of complicated changes," said another minister.

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## Violence, low turnout mark Ctg polls

### 50 including Chandgaon OC hurt

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Jan 3: Gunshots, bomb explosions and clashes between police and Opposition activists marked the Chittagong City Corporation polls today, held amid tight security with a very low turnout of voters.

Forged votes were allegedly cast by cadres of some terrorist leaders and ward commissioner candidates. Ballot boxes were snatched from two polling centres, police and witnesses said.

The four-party opposition alliance which boycotted and vowed to resist the polls enforced a 48-hour curfew halt in the port city from yesterday morning to keep voters indoors.

Most of polling centres out of 345 came under intermittent bomb attacks from early morning, triggering clashes between police and Opposition activists leaving at least 50 people injured, including a police official, ten of them bullet-hit.

Panicked residents kept indoors, resulting to a very low turnout, witnesses said. Polling was held from 8 am to 4 pm.

The bullet-hit people were admitted to Chittagong Medical College Hospital.

Ballot boxes were snatched

from Patantoli Jamir Uddin Primary School and West Madarbari City Corporation School centres at around noon amid gunshots, police and witnesses said. Polling was suspended for about an hour in both the centres.

However, officials at the election control room told this correspondent at noon that 20 to 30 per cent votes were cast.

Though queues were seen in some centres in the morning, few voters were seen after about 11 am as violence erupted in most of the centres, where Opposition activists clashed with police who fired shots and tear gas shells.

OC of Chandgaon thana Shafiqul Azam was shot during a shootout between police and Opposition activists at Char Chakral centre at 11 am. At least 20 people were also injured there, witnesses said.

The shootout began when the Opposition activists opened fire and exploded bombs to scare away voters reportedly brought by some candidates, they said.

At Patantoli Jamir Uddin Primary School centre, a clash erupted between rival groups of supporters of two candidates at

about 11 am. Opposition activists joined the clash resulting in a shootout. At one stage, some ballot boxes were snatched from the centre, forcing postponement of polling.

A least 15 people were injured there. Police opened fire and lobbed tear gas shells to disperse clashing groups.

Opposition activists attacked the West Madarbari City Corporation School centre at about 11-30 am and exchanged shots with police. The activists snatched some ballot boxes, police said. The clash left ten persons injured.

Incidents of violence also took place in Patharghata, Bakalla, Dewanbazar, Bagmorim, Chandgaon, Pahartoli, Nasirabad, Hallshahr and Jalalabad areas.

Army, BDR and police patrolled the city during the election. Police arrested 20 people.

Bombs were also hurled at Chandgaon thana at about 1 pm, police said.

Opposition activists chased a ward commissioner candidate, Haji Nurul Haq, at a centre at Boxirhat, hurling bombs at him.

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Two minor children struggle yesterday to cope with chilly morning on a city pavement as winter sets in more biting. Their only sin is they were born to poor parents. —Star photo by Sk Enamul Haq

## TSC incident: Police yet to make headway

By Staff Correspondent

Police are divided on who is responsible for a sexual assault during New Year's celebrations at the TSC early Saturday morning.

Sources said police still couldn't trace the woman who was assaulted or arrest the accused responsible for the incident.

"Nobody, other than university students, would dare do this at the TSC," said a top ranking police officer with the Detective Branch, who requested anonymity.

In an interview last night, Rafiqul Islam, the officer-in-charge of Ramna Police, said the culprits may have come from outside the university. However, he said the police haven't arrested the attackers yet.

"We are still consulting student leaders and other Dhaka University officials to find the attackers," said Islam.

Prof. A.K. Azad Chowdhury, the vice-chancellor of Dhaka University, formed a committee, chaired by Prof. M. Shahadat Ali, to investigate the attack.

Other members of the committee include Dhaka University's proctor, Prof. A.K.M. Nurun Nabi, and its treasurer, Prof. Abul Hashem. The committee has been asked to submit its final report as soon as possible. Meanwhile, Dhaka University authorities and human

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## A day's hartal costs garment exporters about Tk 200cr

By Rafiq Hasan

Political turmoil in Chittagong prevents exporters from shipping their garments, creating large stockpiles and threatening the industry's existence, warns the president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association.

"The deadlock at the port has created tremendous problems in the garments sector, since transport and shipping have been stopped for several days," said Anisur Rahman Sinha. "We have suffered a lot in the last few years but we've always recovered at a high cost. However, the damage this time

could ruin the garment industry."

Association leaders held an emergency meeting last night at a city hotel to discuss ways to resolve the situation. It is planning to hold a round table meeting with the political parties in order to resolve the dispute.

Political parties must reach a consensus on the major issues relating to the development of the people and the country. Otherwise, the ready-made garment industry might go the way of the jute industry, said Sinha.

Sinha said this is the peak period for garment exports due

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## 6-hr hartal observed

By Staff Correspondent

The Opposition-called six-hour countrywide hartal yesterday passed off by and large peacefully except in Chittagong but paralysed normal life and economic activities.

At least 50 people were injured in incidents of violence in the port city. No major incident was reported from any other place in the country.

The dawn to noon hartal was called by the BNP-led opposition alliance to protest the government's "unilateral" holding of Chittagong City Corporation elections. In Chittagong, the hartal was for two days - yesterday and the day before.

In the capital, police picked up some opposition activists on charge of explosion of bombs.

Pro-hartal pickets burnt tyres and hurled hand bombs on WASA road, Naya Paltan and Jatrahari areas and in old part of the city. None, however, was injured in the incidents.

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## Thick fog, severe cold Biman flights disrupted

By Special Correspondent

Thick fog and poor visibility in and around Zia International Airport early yesterday morning forced a Biman flight bound for Dhaka to make an emergency landing in Chittagong.

The fog also delayed departure of a domestic flight from Dhaka to Chittagong, Civil Aviation sources said.

Our correspondent from Chittagong said the DC-10 flight from London with 275 passengers on board landed at MA Hannan Airport at 9 am after failing to touch down at ZIA. However, it returned to Dhaka at 10:30 am.

There had been a sudden fall in temperature since Saturday with a continental high pressure in Uttar Pradesh and adjoining areas in India. Met Of-

ice sources said.

It said the minimum temperature of 6.8 degrees Celsius was recorded at Srimangal yesterday. Srimangal also had 6.8 degrees Celsius minimum temperature on Saturday when cold air started blowing across the country.

In Dhaka, the day's minimum was 13 degrees C, followed by Sathkira 9.7, Sitakundu 9.8, Chuadanga and Jessore 10.4, Dinajpur 10.7, Ishurdi 11.2, Rajshahi 11, Tangail 12, Mymensingh 12.2 degrees, Bogra 11.8, Rangpur 11.3, Syedpur 11.2, Rangamati and Feni 11.4 degrees C.

A long range forecast by the Met Office said that temperatures may fall to 5-8 degrees C at least twice this month in Rajshahi and Sylhet divisions,

northern region of Khulna division, Mymensingh, Comilla and Sitakundu region where medium to severe cold will be felt. Elsewhere in the country, there will be mild to medium cold (7-10 degrees C) during the month, the forecast said.

The fall in temperature created problems for the poor in Dhaka city with the poor who sleep in the open being the worst sufferer.

Meanwhile, our Sirajganj correspondent reports: Blinding fog and severe cold crippled life in northern region of the country today.

Thick fog have reduced visibility to almost zero in Dinajpur, Rangpur, Kurigram, Lalmonirhat, Gaibandha and Nilphamari. Blinding cold has con-

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## Jubo League leader shot dead

By Staff Correspondent

A Jubo League leader was gunned down in city's Kalyanpur area last night.

Police said last night that three were allegations Yunus Ali, 35, President of ward 95 Jubo League was murdered as a sequel to rivalry with a local ward commissioner.

The incident took place when Yunus was standing outside his rent-a-car shop in Bas-patti area at about 7:30 pm, police said.

The killers, numbering about three, arrived on a motor bike and shot him at least twice and drove off.

Fatally injured Yunus was rushed to Suhrawardi Hospital where the attending doctors declared him dead.

None was arrested in a connection with the killing and no case was filed till filing of this report late last night.

## Cancel farcical polls: BNP

By Staff Correspondent

The BNP-led opposition alliance yesterday rejected the Chittagong City Corporation election and demanded its immediate cancellation.

Addressing the press at 29 Minto Road, BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan said that the CCC polls were "a total farce" as people did not take part in the voting.

He said that all the polls now being held unilaterally would be cancelled after the removal of the Awami League government.

He said that the armed terrorists belonging to the ruling Awami League, some government officials and hired people had queued up for voting at the CCC yesterday.

Bhuiyan asked the government to immediately stop the holding of such farcical elections and hand over power to a caretaker government for holding parliamentary election prior to all local government polls.

"The government will be forced to quit, if it did not resign immediately," he added.

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## One stabbed to death in city

By Staff Correspondent

A young man was stabbed to death by unidentified miscreants at Golapbagh at Demra in the city yesterday.

The dead was identified as Kamruzzaman Titu, 28, son of Reaz Uddin Chowdhury, a resident of a colony at Motijheel, hospital sources said.

The motive behind the murder could not be known immediately.

Hospital sources quoting relatives of Titu said he was staying with his sister at AGB colony. He went to Chittagong three days back.

The incident occurred when he was returning to his sister's residence at Motijheel yesterday morning. The miscreants stopped him near the Golapbagh field and stabbed him in his chest, hand and leg.

Local devotees found Titu near the field in a critical condition when they were returning home after Fajr prayers. He was rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where the attending doctor declared him dead. The body was sent to the DMCH morgue for autopsy.

A case was filed with Demra police in this connection.

## 8 months of '99 academic yr at CU 'lost'

From Ofuli Hasnat Ruhin

CHITTAGONG, Jan 3: At most eight months have been lost from the academic life of the students of the Chittagong University (CU) in 1999.

Classes were not held for a total period of 237 days out of 365 days.

The varsity was closed without any schedule for as many as 98 days, while classes were not held for 110 days because of scheduled vacation. Besides, there were 29 weekly holidays.

The unscheduled vacations included 15 days from June 16 to 30 due to killing of two students on June 15 and 26, 12 days from August 1 to 12 due to different agitation programmes including hartals, strikes, siege programmes and class boycott enforced by different student organisations as well as the general students for resumption of bus service on the campus.

Following a clash between two rival groups of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) the varsity was closed for 38 days from August 12 to September 20. Thirty three days were closed for student agitation protesting tuition fee hike and demanding other issues at different times in the year 1999.

Meanwhile, during the on-going vacation two students

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## 13 BNP leaders granted ad-interim bail

By Staff Correspondent

The High Court yesterday granted ad-interim bail for three months to 13 BNP leaders, who have been facing various charges, said a press release.

The cases are now pending before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court.

The BNP leaders include Tariqul Islam, Mirza Abbas, Amanullah Aman MP, Barkatullah Bhulu MP, Maj Gen (Retd) ZA Khan, Abdus Salam, Ziauddin Ahmed and Kazi Abul Bashar.

Barrister Moudud Ahmed appeared on behalf of the petitioners and submitted that the cases have been lodged against the BNP leaders only to punish them for their political belief. He said the cases against the leaders are fabricated, baseless and manufactured.



Police raised barbed-wire barricade on Bijoynagar road in the city during hartal yesterday. — Star photo

## Token for tolls from truckers

By Shaikh Nazrul Islam

Despite deployment of army in the city to ease traffic congestion, police continues to collect toll from vehicles.

Rather, police are now realising more toll from vehicles including trucks, buses, auto-tempos and autorickshaws in the name of 'Eid bonus', drivers alleged.

The 'Eid bonus' which is usually more than 100 taka is in addition to a monthly amount of Tk 150 each trucker has to give to police every month for passing through the Dhaka metropolitan area, a truck

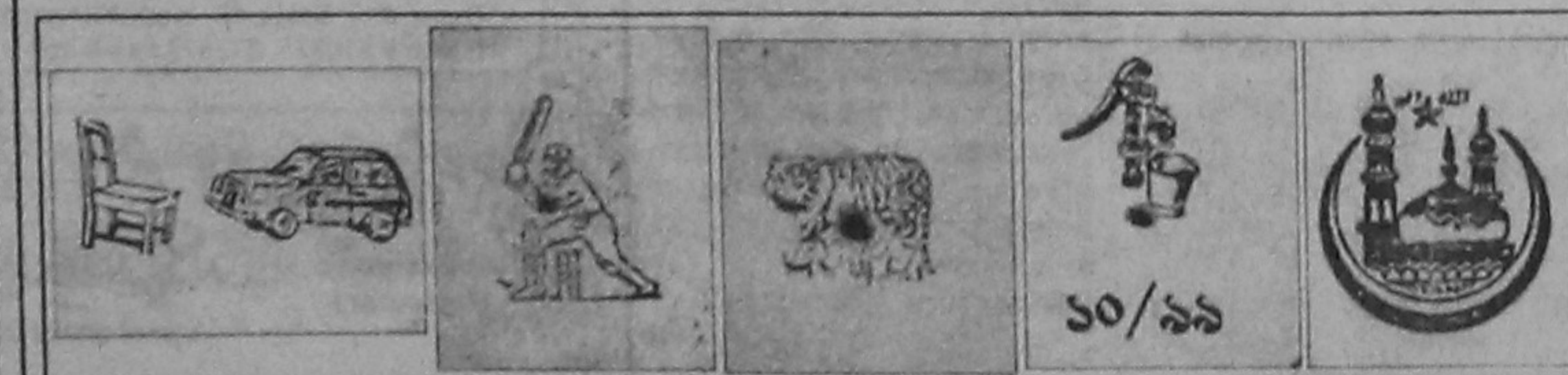
driver said. The money is realised by plainclothes men on behalf of a thana and a 'token' is issued, which is used as a 'route permit'. The token is renewed every month, some truckers said.

The token, issued from a police station at the entry of the city, also helps them evade police harassment for over loading and lack of essential documents, they said.

This correspondent collected some tokens from some truck drivers. The tokens are made of

hard paper with different logos printed on one side and the date of issuance on the other side. The logos are of Royal Bengal Tiger, a cricket batsman, mosque, moon and star. The logos are changed from time to time, they said.

Some drivers of minibuses, auto-rickshaws and auto-tempos also alleged that police are realising more toll now as 'Eid bonus' in addition to the fixed amounts they pay to thanas every month. But they are not given any token.



Some of the tokens collected from truckers. — Star photo

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### Sehri, Iftar timings

Ramadan	Jan	Sehri	Iftar
26	04	—	5:28
27	05	5:18	5:29
28	06	5:18	5:30

### Prayer Timings

January 4		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5:18	5:25
Zohr	12:45	1:15
Asr	3:42	4:00
Maghrib	5:28	5:32
Tarabi	7:15	7:35

Source: Islamic Foundation